

Message Text

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SUBJ: EDITORIAL IN IRISH PRESS APRIL 20, 1977

FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED IN IRISH PRESS, APRIL 20, 1977
UNDER HEEADING SAVING ENERGY:

IT IS A SAD REFLECTION ON THE MENTALITY OF THE WESTERN
WORLD THAT ONLY WHEN THE UNITED STATES TAKES ACTION, OR ITS
PRESIDENT MAKES A STATEMENT, DO THE REST OF THE INDUSTRIALISED
NATIONS SIT UP AND TAKE NOTICE. SINCE THE YOM KIPPUR WAR OF
1973, THE EEC COMMISSION HAS BEEN WARNING THE MEMBER
STATES THAT THEY SHOULD CUT DOWN ON OIL CONSUMPTION, THAT
THEY SHOULD INTRODUCE CONSERVATION MEASURES AND ALL OF
THEM HAVE DONE SO WITH SOME DEGREE OF SUCCESS, WITH THE
EXCEPTION OF IRELAND. WE HAVE THE POOREST RECORD IN THE
COMMUNITY -- A SORRY STATE OF AFFAIRS WHEN WE REALISE
THAT WE ARE TOTALLY DEPENDENT ON IMPORTS OF ALL FUELS,
EXCEPT TURF AND, NOW, SOME NATURAL GAS, FOR RUNNING OUR
INDUSTRIES AND OUR AGRICULTURE, FOR THE PRODUCTION OF BOTH
ELECTRICITY AND GAS FOR WARMING OUR HOMES AND OUR SCHOOLS
AND EVEN FOR SUPPLYING THE RAW MATERIALS FOR OUR FERTILISER
PLANTS. IF PRESIDENT CARTER SEES THE NEED FOR THE
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UNITED STATES TO CUT BACK ON FUEL CONSUMPTION, THEN HOW
MUCH MORE NECESSARY IT IS FOR US HERE AT HOME TO DO AT
LEAST AS MUCH.

HOWEVER, IT IS REFRESHING TO SEE THAT A PRESIDENT
OF THE UNITED STATES HAS FACED UP TO, SHALL WE SAY,
THE PROFLIGACY OF AMERICANS IN THEIR USE OF PETROLEUM

PRODUCTS. IT MIGHT WELL BE THAT THEY HAVE BEEN CONDITIONED TO HAVE EVERYTHING BIGGER AND BETTER -- CERTAINLY THE SMALL CARS OF EUROPE HAVE NOT HAD MUCH SUCCESS ON THE AMERICAN MARKET -- BUT IT IS HARD TO ACCEPT THAT A NATION WHICH HAS PUT MEN ON THE MOON AND SATELLITES ON MARS DOES NOT HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY TO PRODUCE MORE EFFICIENT CAR ENGINES, USING LESS FUEL THAN THE CURRENT ONES DO.

WHILE THE PRESIDENT'S FULL PACKAGE OF CONSERVATION MEASURES, OR ENERGY POLICY AS IT IS CALLED, WILL NOT BE REVEALED UNTIL HE PRESENTS IT TO CONGRESS TONIGHT, SUFFICIENT DETAILS HAVE BEEN LEAKED -- IF THAT IS NOT AN UNHAPPY WORD IN THE PRESENT CONTEXT -- TO GIVE THE REST OF THE WORLD SOME IDEA OF MR CARTER'S THINKING ON THE SUBJECT. CONSUMPTION OF PETROL MUST BE REDUCED BY AT LEAST TEN PER CENT AND CRUDE OIL IMPORTS WILL HAVE TO BE CUT IN HALF, FROM A POTENTIAL 16 MILLION BARRELS A DAY TO SIX MILLION. AT LEAST THIS WILL EXTEND THE OIL AVAILABLE FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD, BUT WITH THE ARABS SO CONCERNED ABOUT RETAINING THE LEVEL OF THEIR OIL REVENUES WE CAN ONLY EXPECT TO PAY EVEN HIGHER PRICES FOR THE CRUDE THEY SELL US. AS WE REPORT ELSEWHERE TODAY, THE OIL COMPANIES ARE NOW SEEKING AN INCREASE OF 2 AND A HALF PENCE PER GALLON, AND THIS EVEN BEFORE MR CARTER'S MEASURES BEGIN TO BITE ON THE MIDDLE EAST MARKETS.

THERE CANNOT BE MUCH DOUBT ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF MR CARTER'S MEASURES - THEY WILL, IN THE LONG RUN, PRESERVE FOR AMERICA ITS OWN RESERVES OF OIL WHEN THE REST OF THE WORLD
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RUNS DRY. IT HAS BEEN CLAIMED, ACROSS THE ATLANTIC, THAT THE VAST POTENTIAL OF OIL-BEARING SHALE WOULD BE TOO EXPENSIVE TO PROCESS, BUT WITH THE INEVITABLE PRICE INCREASES AMONG THE OIL PRODUCING AND EXPORTING COUNTRIES, RECOVERING FUEL FROM SHALE IS SOON LIKELY TO PROVE AN ECONOMIC PROPOSITION. MEANWHILE, AMERICA, AND PERHAPS EUROPE, TOO, WILL TURN ONCE AGAIN TO COAL MINING, REACTIVATING THOSE MINES WHICH WERE RUN DOWN IN THE EUPHORIA ENGENDERED BY WHAT SEEMED TO BE AN ENDLESS SUPPLY OF INEXPENSIVE OIL.

PERHAPS MR CARTER'S GRIM WARNING OF COMING CATASTROPHE FOR THE UNITED STATES, AND BY IMPLICATION FOR THE REST OF THE WORLD, WILL STIR OUR OWN LEADERS INTO TAKING ACTION BEYOND MERE EXHORTATION - IT SHOULD BE POSSIBLE TO FORMULATE LAWS WHICH CURB EXCESSIVE USE OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS, ESPECIALLY FOR DOMESTIC USE. OUR CITY STREETS ARE JAMMED TIGHT AT RUSH HOURS OFTEN WITH CARS CARRYING JUST ONE PERSON. CAR SHARING WOULD NOT ONLY SAVE FUEL, IT WOULD HELP FIGHT POLLUTION, IT WOULD REDUCE FRAYED TEMPERS AND, WITH CIE FARES NOW AS

HIGH AS THEY ARE, IT WOULD PROVE ECONOMICAL. TO TRAVEL
BY BUS INTO THE CITY CENTRE NOW COSTS 25P. FOUR PEOPLE
SHARING A CAR COULD DO THE JOURNEY AT LESS THAN HALF THAT
PRICE. CUTTING DOWN ON FUEL CONSUMPTION WOULD ALSO HELP
OUR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS, HELP CUT INFLATION AND ENSURE
THAT THE WHEELS OF INDUSTRY, AT LEAST, WOULD KEEP TURNING
FOR LONGER THAN NOW SEEMS ECONOMICALLY FEASIBLE.

THE TROUBLE IS, OF COURSE, THAT IT WOULD ALSO HIT EXCHEQUER
REVENUE FROM PETROL AND DIESEL TAXES. YET THE SAVINGS,
IN HEALTH COSTS, IN REDUCTION OF WORKING HOURS LOST, IN SAVING ON
ROAD MAINTENANCE - SUCH AS IT IS - WOULD MORE THAN BALANCE
WHAT MR RYAN AND HIS SUCCESSORS WOULD LOSE. EVEN THE COST
OF A MASSIVE PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN, TO MAKE OUR PEOPLE MORE
AWARE OF THE NEED FOR CONSERVING ENERGY, WOULD BE REPAID A
HUNDRED-FOLD BY THE MARGINAL BENEFITS PRODUCED. KRENE

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